



MALAWI

2023 IFRC network country plan

Funding Requirement **CHF 21.7**

Appeal number **MAAMW003**

In support of the Malawi Red Cross Society



33

National Society branches



210

National Society staff



76,000

National Society volunteers

People to be reached



160,000

Ongoing emergency operations



920,000

Climate and environment



2.3M

Disasters and crises



2.3M

Health and wellbeing



320,000

Migration and displacement



2,000

Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network multiyear focus

Emergency response

- Integrated response to the impact of tropical storms

Longer term needs

- Disaster risk reduction and response
 - Food security and livelihoods
- Health, and water, sanitation and hygiene
 - Climate change adaptation

Capacity development

- Volunteer management
- Resource mobilization

Key country data

Population **19.6M**

INFORM Severity rating **medium**

Long-term Climate Risk Index **62**

Human Development Index rank **169**

Population below poverty level **50.7%**

Hazards



Tropical storms



Disease outbreaks



Floods



Drought



Food insecurity



Poverty

Funding requirements

Total 21.7M CHF

Through the IFRC

10.4M CHF

Through Participating National Societies

6.2M CHF

Host National Society

5.1M CHF

IFRC Breakdown

5.3M CHF

Ongoing emergency operations

Longer term needs

766,000 CHF

Climate and environment

1.5M CHF

Disasters and crises

1.4M CHF

Health and wellbeing

153,000 CHF

Migration and displacement

510,000 CHF

Values, power and inclusion

714,000 CHF

Enabling local actors

Ongoing emergencies

MDRMW015

Malawi – Tropical Storm Ana

Participating National Societies

American Red Cross*

Belgian Red Cross

British Red Cross*

The Canadian Red Cross Society*

Danish Red Cross

Finnish Red Cross

Icelandic Red Cross

Italian Red Cross

Japanese Red Cross Society*

Red Cross of Monaco*

The Netherlands Red Cross

Norwegian Red Cross*

Swedish Red Cross*

Swiss Red Cross



NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The Malawi Red Cross Society was established in 1966 by an Act of Parliament and admitted to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 1971. It has acted as an auxiliary to the public authorities since its inception. It supports the national authorities in disaster preparedness, risk reduction and response, and is a key national humanitarian organization involved in strengthening Malawi's legal and policy framework for disaster risk management.

As a volunteer member organization with 33 divisions and a network of more than 76,000 volunteers, the National Society is present in all 28 districts of the country and responds to multiple disasters and crises. At a national level, it has a pool of 120 trained national disaster response team members specialized in different fields, including: water, sanitation and hygiene; relief support; first aid; community engagement and accountability; shelter; nutrition; food security; livelihoods; protection, gender and inclusion; data management; and communications.

The National Society's staff, volunteers, communities and community leaders have been trained on community engagement and accountability, and it has integrated this way of working into its programming. It has also institutionalized cash and voucher assistance by implementing cash transfers since 2009.

The Malawi Red Cross provided vital support to the health authorities for the COVID-19 response, working in partnership with the Ministry of Health which provides overall technical coordination. The National Society was responsible for distributing medical equipment, raising community awareness on prevention measures and providing water, sanitation and hygiene services, and it supported the national COVID-19 vaccination campaign. It was also one of the leading humanitarian organizations to support the Government in the fight against the cholera outbreak in 2022.

Staff and volunteers are trained in community-based health, first aid and disease surveillance, and focus on active case finding. The National Society has substantial experience in implementing health programmes, including health care in emergencies.

The Malawi Red Cross [Strategic Plan 2020–2024](#) defines its four strategic priority areas as:

- Building safer and more resilient communities through comprehensive disaster management
- Increasing access to health services and encouraging healthy behaviour
- Strengthening branches, volunteer management, membership and youth engagement
- Increasing the resource base, effective service delivery and accountability

IFRC NETWORK ACTION IN 2023

Joint situational analysis

Malawi is a small, land-locked country in Southern Africa that shares borders with Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania. It is split by the Great Rift Valley in the north and is dominated by Lake Malawi, with its extensive biodiversity, running from north to south. Lake Malawi provides food and transportation to the population, and attracts tourists. Malawi covers an area of more than 118,000 km², and the length of it makes access and logistics difficult, with the capital Lilongwe situated roughly in the middle of the country and the city of Blantyre in the south.

With a population of more than 19.6 million people, Malawi is ranked 61 out of 196 countries for population

density. The fertility rate is currently 4.25 births per woman. The population is increasing by about three per cent per year, and it is expected to double by 2038. Overall, however, Malawi experiences negative net migration.

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world and, according to the Human Development Index ranking system, one of the world's least developed. Education levels are low, with only 51 per cent of children completing primary level education, and about 70 per cent of the population live below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per day.

Malawi's slow development is partly due to its landlocked position, its poor level of natural resources, its reliance on rain-fed agriculture, and low levels of social and technical innovation.

Malawi has made significant economic and structural reforms to help build economic growth, and it has moved up 45 per cent in the HDI rankings over the past 30 years. However, the economy is still heavily dependent on rain-fed agriculture, which provides livelihoods for 80–90 per cent of the population. This makes people's livelihoods highly vulnerable to hydrometeorological hazards. Agriculture in Malawi is dualistic – large estates generate most of the country's foreign exchange income, while most people grow subsistence crops on overcrowded plots. Malawi's main exports are tobacco, tea and sugar.

Most rural families experience poverty, and those headed by women are frequently the most vulnerable. Economic growth increased by 2.4 per cent in 2020, and in 2021, favourable weather conditions and agricultural input subsidies led to a one-off jump in maize and tobacco production. However, in 2022, the rain-fed agricultural system was badly affected by climate shocks, drought and flooding – farmland was damaged and infrastructure such as irrigation networks were destroyed.

The Government is trying to diversify and boost Malawi's economy, and some economic sectors such as mining, energy supply (especially green energy), agri-business processing and tourism are growing. However, both commerce and industrial levels remain low, and innovation and technology are proving slow to develop. The Government is also working on making economic reforms that will increase trade and investment, in both the public and private sectors.

Malawi's economy has been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, although there are now signs of recovery. The fourth wave of COVID-19, which started in December 2021, has had a less severe economic impact than the earlier waves, but the combination of restrictions and health problems have affected the livelihoods of a large proportion of the population. Public debt levels have also gone up since the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing Malawi's risk of debt stress and making debt levels unsustainable. Inflation rates have continued to rise in 2022, from 12 per cent in January to about 25

per cent in the middle of the year. This is due to rising global commodity prices and fuel costs, the impact of the conflict in Ukraine, the depreciation of the kwacha and evolving economic conditions.

Malawi is a peaceful country and has had stable governments since independence in 1964. The one-party rule system ended in 1993 and, since then, multi-party presidential and parliamentary elections have been held every five years. After the sixth election in May 2019, however, internal unrest led to the presidential results being nullified by the constitutional court in February 2020. Fresh presidential elections were held five months later, in which Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party and Saulos Chilima of the UTM Party received 58.6 per cent of the votes and were elected President and Vice-President respectively. The President leads a coalition of nine political parties, the Tonse Alliance, that will remain in power until 2025.

Malawi faces major ongoing climate and environmental challenges, and recent high temperatures and weather extremes are having a serious impact on environmental ecosystems. In 2022, Tropical Storm Ana affected 990,000 people, causing severe devastation, the destruction of livelihoods and loss of life. Deforestation, limited water supply, old farming practices (that cause soil erosion and reduced yields) and declining fisheries create further challenges. There is also limited institutional capacity to manage Malawi's natural resources.

Low investment in agriculture and agricultural diversification has led to widespread food and livelihood insecurity for millions of rural Malawians, increasing their reliance on humanitarian assistance, especially in central and southern Malawi.

While the Government of Malawi is committed to making reforms that would advance the country's development, improvements to living conditions have been minimal so far. The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, comprised of a series of five-year plans, guides the country's development. The third and current plan – Building a Productive, Competitive and Resilient Nation – runs until the end of 2022 and focuses on education, energy, agriculture, health and tourism. In January 2021, the Government also launched Malawi Vision 2063, which aims to transform Malawi into a developed, self-reliant, middle-income country.

Ongoing emergency response

For real-time information on emergencies, see IFRC GO page [Malawi](#)

Malawi – Tropical Storm Ana: MDRMW015

Emergency Appeal launched: 24 January 2022

Emergency Appeal ends: 30 June 2023

Affected: 536,352

People to be assisted: 753,869 [at risk]

Short description of the emergency

Tropical Storm Ana struck Madagascar, Mozambique and Malawi with high winds and torrential rains, leaving at least 80 people dead. Strong winds and heavy rains first hit the southern and central districts of Malawi on 24 January 2022, and in a matter of hours, communities were washed out by significant floods. Some of the areas affected by Storm Ana were already suffering from flooding due to the ongoing rainy season. Fields were submerged causing livestock to drown, destroying the livelihoods of rural families. It was reported that at least 115,388 hectares of crops had been destroyed.

Swollen rivers washed away bridges, and public infrastructure including health facilities and churches were reported to be damaged. More than 228 schools had their buildings destroyed, leaving more than 114,218 children without learning facilities. The flooding caused severe damage to key hydro stations, heavily reducing power generation, and leaving households with intermittent power supply.

By 8 February, the Department of Disaster Management Affairs reported that 46 people had died, 18 were missing, 206 had been injured, and approximately 946,728 people had been affected. More than 190,429 people (32,935 households) were displaced by the floods and sought refuge in 178 displacement sites, including designated camps, churches, schools and other public structures. Before this disaster, the affected areas were already on the Integrated Food Security classification scale (IPC) phases 2 and 3 – stress and crisis.

This already dire humanitarian situation was exacerbated by Tropical Storm Gombe, which brought high rainfall to southern Malawi on 11–14 February, creating further destruction in areas that had already been affected by Tropical Storm Ana. Seven people were reported dead as a result of the torrential rains and

subsequent flooding, which occurred in the districts of Nsanje, Chikwawa, Phalombe, Machinga and Mangochi. The rains also damaged civil infrastructure, including the main national road, and houses were washed away or left uninhabitable. In the aftermath of the storm, a cholera outbreak was reported in the Nsanje district, linked to an ongoing outbreak in neighbouring Mozambique.

Short description of the emergency operational strategy

The IFRC released a Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) allocation on 9 December 2021 to support the Malawi Red Cross Society in its response to the excessive flooding in Salima district. However, the flooding increased because of continued heavy seasonal rains, so the IFRC made a second DREF allocation to enable the National Society to scale up its response in two additional districts: Nsanje and Chikwawa.

On 24 January 2022, the IFRC launched an Emergency Appeal to support the Malawi Red Cross with providing emergency response and recovery support for 160,000 people directly affected by Tropical Storm Ana. The Appeal absorbed and scaled up the December 2021 DREF flooding response, expanding it to include the most vulnerable communities and additional districts. Phalombe, Zomba, Blantyre, Chiradzulu, Thyolo, Mulanje, Balaka, Machinga, Mangochi, Neno, Mwanza, Mchinji and Dedza districts were prioritized.

The focus of the response has been on the immediate needs of displaced families and people hosted in camps, with the aim of supporting them to return to their homes and start rebuilding their houses and livelihoods. Long-term disaster risk reduction is also an important component.

Areas of emergency response by sector

The Malawi Red Cross has been responding to the emergency through the provision of:

- Short-, medium- and long-term shelter and settlement assistance to affected communities, including immediate assistance to those displaced and in camps
- Support for displaced families to return to their homes with shelter kits and essential household items

- Basic needs assistance for livelihoods, including food and unconditional and multi-purpose cash grants
- Support to enhance livelihoods through food production, income generating activities, distribution of productive assets to farmers (including seeds, tools, and food for poultry and livestock), cash grants or voucher intervention, technical support and vocational training programmes
- Community-based disease prevention and health promotion, support to national vaccination activities, maternal and infant health care, social mobilization and risk communication activities
- Training for volunteers and staff in psychological first aid and training and delivery of psychosocial support
- Access to safe water and hygiene promotion
- Protection, gender and inclusion informed multi-sector needs assessments, to identify and address gender and other specific needs and protection risks – including the prevention of, and response to, sexual and gender-based violence and all forms of violence against children
- Training for local community disaster management committees to strengthen community preparedness for future disasters
- Increased National Society preparedness for floods and cyclone seasons – this will be achieved by updating the contingency plan, conducting emergency simulation exercises and pre-positioning stocks
- Green solutions – ensuring that recovery programmes apply nature-based solutions where feasible, and carrying out tree planting and reforestation activities

Needs remaining at the end of the emergency response in June 2023 will be covered through the strategic priorities of this country plan.

Strategic priorities

Climate and environment

Malawi, as a landlocked country, is highly vulnerable to changing climate patterns and weather shocks. It is particularly prone to adverse climate hazards that include dry spells, seasonal droughts, intense rainfall, riverine floods and flash floods. Droughts and floods, the most severe of these hazards, have increased in frequency, intensity and magnitude over the last 20 years. As a result, there has been significant damage to food and water security, water quality, energy resources and the sustainability of livelihoods in the most rural communities. There is also a risk that tropical storms will increase in intensity in future, because of climate change.

Malawians are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate-related shocks and stresses due to a widespread dependence on agriculture and a reliance on small parcels of densely cultivated land for livelihoods. Subsistence farming practices have led to soil erosion and the reduced productivity of available farmland. This has, in turn, reduced crop supplies for subsistence farmers and increased food insecurity. This problem has been further exacerbated by recent recurring droughts, which are often followed by intense periods

of flooding – both of which can be devastating for communities' homes and crops.

The country's economy is highly dependent on Lake Malawi. However, the changing climate, overfishing and pollution have led to declining fish stocks. This has had a negative impact on the biodiversity of the area and the livelihoods of communities.

Poverty, a scarcity of land resources and a growing population continue to put pressure on Malawi's natural resources. Heavier but less predictable rains, hotter weather and extended dry periods are making planting and harvesting more difficult. Deforestation has also increased in recent years, and water resources are becoming increasingly limited for communities to use in subsistence agriculture and daily life.

Increasing urbanization, on the other hand, has led to overpopulation and pollution, putting pressure on urban areas. Around 18 per cent of Malawians now live in cities, increasing the demands on existing limited urban infrastructure and systems. Rising temperatures and increased water scarcity will lead to worsening living conditions and sanitation in poor urban environments.

The Malawi Government is working to address these issues. It aims to build a greener economy, but it has a limited institutional capacity to manage the country's natural resources or drive rapid change. This is a challenge for the environmental sustainability of Malawi and its capacity to manage or adapt to climate change, while ensuring the sustainability of its land resources. The Government is working with Malawian institutions, including the Malawi Red Cross, to advance climate-smart agriculture and livelihoods and climate-resilient development.

The Government aims to restore 4.5 million hectares of degraded land by 2030, and 1.3 million hectares have been restored so far. The planting of 60 million trees in Malawi will be a giant step towards achieving this goal. The authorities are also developing the Malawi Watershed Services Improvement Project, which aims to promote sustainable landscape management practices in priority watersheds and improve rural livelihoods.

Further efforts are required to enable people in Malawi to withstand the increasingly frequent and intense climatic shocks that come with the global climate crisis. This is a priority for the country's National Resilience Strategy – supported by the Malawi Red Cross and UN partners – which the Government has developed to build resilience and implement climate-resilient development. The strategy will address water, soil and air pollution and facilitate climate-smart agriculture.

Main actions and areas of support

The Malawi Red Cross is part of the [IFRC Global Climate Resilience Programme](#), which aims to foster an unprecedented scale-up in locally led climate-smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts to prevent and reduce climate-related disaster impacts, and build community-level climate resilience. The programme aims to support 500 million people in 100 of the most climate-vulnerable countries, focusing on the least supported and marginalized communities. This holistic, multi-year programmatic approach consists of four operational pillars: (1) scaling up climate-smart disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action and preparedness; (2) reducing the public health impacts of climate change; (3) addressing climate displacement; and (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

The National Society is committed to enabling sustainable local adaptation measures, including tree planting and management, investments in energy-saving

cooking stoves, and teaching communities about making briquets as an alternative to firewood as an income-generating activity.

The focus of the Malawi Red Cross's work will be on reducing the current and future humanitarian impacts of climate and environmental crises, while supporting people to adapt and thrive in their changing environments. This will be achieved through the following objectives:

- To facilitate adaptation to the longer-term impacts of climate change by 2025
- To leverage nature-based solutions focused on reducing disaster risks, and adapting to and mitigating climate change, with a particular focus on planting trees and mangroves, in line with the IFRC Pan-African Tree Planting and Care initiative
- To implement environmental or climate campaigns focused on behaviour change, plastic reduction and clean-ups

In 2023, with support from the IFRC network, the Malawi Red Cross will conduct the following activities:

- Train and equip volunteers and staff to work to address the impacts of the changing climate and environmental risks
- Raise awareness and facilitate campaigns with volunteers, staff and stakeholders on climate change and disaster risk reduction
- Support staff and volunteers to undertake risk mapping and risk profiling, [vulnerability, impact and capacity assessments](#), to support better disaster risk planning
- Establish volunteer and community climate action groups that will champion positive climate action in their communities
- Support volunteer and community climate action groups with the resources required to undertake local action – offering information, knowledge sharing and technical guidance on climate-related issues
- Facilitate locally acceptable climate adaptation interventions such as community wood lots or planting vetiver grass
- Facilitate the production of paper briquets and use of energy-saving stoves



Disasters and crises

People in Malawi face many natural and man-made hazards, especially storms, flooding and droughts. Tropical Storm Ana hit Malawi in January 2022, followed by Tropical Cyclone Gombe in March 2022. Storm Ana caused widespread flooding and destruction, much of which is yet to be repaired, while Cyclone Gombe inflicted heavy rains and flooding that damaged homes, farmland and infrastructure. The floods led to the disruption of water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure and activities, and restricted access to health services. The cumulative effect of Malawi's heavy storm seasons increases the risks of poverty and food insecurity, while decreasing people's resilience each time they occur.

Recurrent poor harvests continue to have an impact on food security and nutrition in Malawi. Although droughts and water supply levels have fluctuated over recent years, food insecurity remains consistently high. Overall, weather fluctuations negatively affect harvest yields and food production – rainfall deficits caused low harvests and severe food insecurity in 2013, 2018 and 2019, although there was a record harvest in 2021. The ongoing food security crisis is exacerbated by low investment in agriculture and a lack of agricultural diversification, which leaves millions of rural subsistence farmers facing increasing food and livelihood insecurity.

One-third of Malawi's population (5.4 million people) were expected to face severe food insecurity from

August 2022 to January 2023, according to the World Food Programme. More than 37 per cent of children have stunted growth due to malnutrition, which leaves them more susceptible to illnesses and infections.

Other hazards include landslides, fires and epidemics, while political protests also pose a risk to the safety of the people who participate and nearby communities. The impact of such events is exacerbated in an environment where approximately half the population are living below the poverty line. Therefore, disaster preparedness and risk reduction are of paramount importance.

The Malawi Government established a National Disaster Risk Management Policy in 2015. This led to the establishment of the Department of Disaster Management Affairs, and strengthened the country's readiness for disasters and disaster risk management. To further reduce exposure to risk, the Government also developed the National Contingency Plan for 2021–2022, which included plans to address the impacts of floods, dry spells, disease outbreaks, pest infestation, strong winds and stormy rains. The Government has emphasized the importance of transitioning from relief to resilience, while addressing the root causes of food insecurity, with the aim of scaling up interventions focused on integrated resilience.

Main actions and areas of support

In its position as an auxiliary to the public authorities, the Malawi Red Cross is a key national humanitarian organization. It has worked with the Government to strengthen the legal and policy framework for disaster risk management, which is critical to reducing disasters and climate risks, and building sustainable resilience.

In line with IFRC Pan-African Red Ready initiative, the National Society will focus on preparedness and readiness to respond to shocks, enhancing community risk reduction and resilience. This includes early warning, early action and anticipation to mitigate risks from the many hazards that affect the lives, livelihoods, homes and living conditions of vulnerable communities and the most disadvantaged and hard to reach people.

The Malawi Red Cross has the following objectives:

- To reach out to people with support services, in-kind, cash and voucher assistance for emergency response and recovery, with the goal of delivering half of its assistance in the form of cash by 2025
- To facilitate preparedness and capacity-building processes such as preparedness for effective response, cash preparedness and logistics
- To respond to crises and disasters
- To facilitate the adoption of new legal instruments related to disaster law
- To provide shelter and urban strategies which include city-level coordination, partnerships with development actors, and creating municipal contingency and response plans

The Malawi Red Cross also aims to develop a more holistic approach to food security, in alignment with the IFRC Pan-African Zero Hunger Initiative. This aims to deliver rapid support for food and nutrition security and livelihoods, alongside a long-term strategy that works towards zero hunger and more sustainable development.

In 2023, with support from the IFRC network, the Malawi Red Cross plans to:

- Develop and review or revamp community early warning and early action systems
- Support access to, understanding of, and the use of seasonal weather forecasts at national, district and community levels
- Facilitate the dissemination of community weather forecasts and early warning, early action activities

- Set up and train community watch teams to report early warnings related to climate risks, and engage in early warning, early action initiatives
- Expand collaborations with community-based organizations to expand activities around risk identification, mapping, vulnerability, risk mitigation, and impact and capacity assessments
- Participate in national cash working group coordination meetings
- Support the orientation of stakeholders, staff, volunteers and communities on disaster response, assessments and distribution processes
- Support monthly market assessments using data and information from partners such as the World Food Programme
- Support cash delivery through financial service providers

Health and wellbeing

Over the last two decades, Malawi has made considerable gains in most health indicators by focusing on improving the delivery of essential health services. It is one of a few sub-Saharan African countries that achieved Millennium Development Goal Four (child survival) by 2015. The Government of Malawi reduced maternal mortality by 53 per cent between 1990 and 2013, and the number of HIV/AIDS deaths by 73 per cent.

The number of new HIV infections has gone down by 41 per cent since 2003. However, there are still more than one million people living with HIV/AIDS in Malawi and about 34,000 new infections a year, with women disproportionately affected. There are approximately 770,000 children already orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The President has set up an Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief to mitigate the social and economic impact of the disease, particularly among vulnerable young people.

Malaria remains the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in children under five. There are nearly five million cases of malaria each year and the disease is endemic in 95 per cent of the country. The Ministry of Health estimates that malaria accounts for 34 per cent of all outpatient visits, 40 per cent of all hospital admissions among children under five, and four in 10 deaths in hospital.

COVID-19 remains an immediate public health risk across Malawi, despite the decreasing number of cases, and the virus continues to put additional pressure on health providers. Although the country had relatively few

cases in 2020, a new faster-spreading wave hit in 2021 and overwhelmed the health care system. Alongside its Southern African neighbours, Malawi experienced a high number of COVID-19 fatalities – 3.1 per cent of all cases (2,673) resulted in death. Malawi had registered 87,718 confirmed COVID-19 cases between 2020 and August 2022, and the pandemic continues to have an impact on lives and livelihoods. While the short-term effects of COVID-19 on the economy have not been as heavy as in other African countries, global movement restrictions have affected trade and tourism. National containment measures have also affected employment, resulting in loss of income for poor households.

The first case of polio in Malawi since 1992 was reported by the Ministry of Health in February 2022 in the Lilongwe district, and the President declared it an emergency. This was the first detected case of type 1 wild poliovirus (WPV1) in Africa since 2016, and it required an immediate response to prevent its spread. Neighbouring Mozambique also declared four confirmed cases. WPV1 mostly exists in communities where vaccination coverage is low or children are not vaccinated, and where water and sanitation infrastructure is poor. The Ministry of Health in Malawi, with support from partners including the Malawi Red Cross and the IFRC, set up strategies in line with the World Health Organization's Global Polio End Game Strategy. It doubled its surveillance measures and immunization efforts – through the National Expanded Programme on Immunization – and introduced other wider measures to reduce the risk of spread to other locations and countries. The IFRC also launched a [DREF allocation](#) for WPV1 in March 2022, to enable the National Society to support polio eradication campaigns in the districts of Mzimba, Mzuzu, Dowa, Lilongwe, Mangochi and Mulanje.

Malawi had been declared polio-free in 2005, and Africa in 2020. The WPV1 cases detected in Malawi and Mozambique will not alter Africa's certification as free from wild poliovirus, because the strain is not indigenous but linked to a strain originating in Pakistan.

Malawi's national routine vaccination programme has achieved high coverage rates of 80 per cent in most of the country's 29 districts over the last two decades, including polio. Some districts, however, have experienced lower coverage due to high population movement from neighbouring countries, increasing the risk of international spread. The Government has committed to reaching 90 per cent coverage of the population by improving routine immunization indicators at the national level, and improving access and utilization of immunization services. It also intends to increase

disease surveillance and good quality supplementary immunization.

Achieving and sustaining routine immunization coverage, along with high-quality supplementary vaccination coverage, is key to interrupting the transmission of any outbreak. Two incomplete rounds of vaccination against WPV1 have been conducted, with only five districts in round one and nine in round two passing quality controls. A third round of the national mass vaccination campaign for children under five was launched in August 2022, targeting about 3.4 million people across all 29 districts. The goal of the third round is to immunize every child under five with the oral polio vaccine, regardless of their previous immunization status, in order to disrupt the spread of the virus. The vaccination campaign will also target households, schools and churches.

In addition to vaccination, the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners have worked to improve and expand two types of surveillance intervention to detect potential future polio outbreaks. Surveillance of acute flaccid paralysis will be conducted to detect paralysis and mobility issues, which are physical symptoms of polio, and there will also be environmental surveillance to examine samples of human faecal waste and water for traces of polio. The Malawi Red Cross has worked to increase awareness of WPV1 among communities and health workers, and has increased levels of community surveillance and alert in six districts.

Malawi is currently experiencing one of its worst cholera outbreaks in years. The first case was registered in the Machinga district in the southern region of Malawi on 2 March 2022, and the Ministry of Health declared the cholera outbreak the next day. By 11 September, a total of 2,479 cholera cases and 85 deaths were recorded, with a case fatality rate of 3.4 per cent. Supported by an IFRC [DREF allocation](#), the Malawi Red Cross has developed a cholera response plan to address the outbreak.

Access to safe water and sanitation has decreased in 19 of Malawi's 29 districts, resulting in an increase in outbreaks of communicable diseases. There have been more cholera outbreaks, and four districts have reported more serious incidences of diarrhoeal diseases. In August 2022, the Ministry of Health declared a further major outbreak of cholera in Nkhata Bay in northern Malawi. The WHO is working closely with the Government, the Nkhata Bay District Health Office and the Malawi Red Cross to build community awareness and engagement around the cholera outbreaks, and to transmit health promotion and cholera prevention messages.

In drought-prone districts, less than 67 per cent of water points now function during the dry season. It is estimated that more than 495,000 people have insufficient or unreliable access to water, sanitation and hygiene during the dry season. This leads to the risk of water and sanitation insecurity and compounds the risk of malnutrition and other problems.

One of the biggest challenges facing Malawi is the capacity and quality of its health infrastructure and systems, which need to be improved if health gains are to be sustained. There are still shortfalls in the number of qualified health workers and in the quality and capacity of health facilities, particularly at a local level. The health needs of marginalized women and young people are recognized as a priority, including for increased family planning services.

Main actions and areas of support

In response to the current cholera outbreak, the Malawi Red Cross is focusing on interrupting its transmission and improving cholera case management at the community and facility levels. It has been monitoring the outbreak through active case finding and working to strengthen community capacities to identify and refer cholera cases, through its Epidemic Control for Volunteers' Toolkit. It has raised awareness of the risks of cholera at the community level and through mass media campaigns. The National Society has also supported the Ministry of Health's oral cholera vaccination campaign, through social mobilization activities in high-risk districts and by promoting hygiene and sanitation as a preventative measure.

The National Society has improved case management both at facility and community levels by establishing four oral rehydration posts and four cholera treatment units. It has purchased infection prevention control equipment and personal protective equipment to be used in the units. It has also redistributed tasks in health facilities, to help nurses deal with the influx of patients, and promoted general hygiene awareness and the continuation of breast-feeding for mothers suffering from cholera.

A continent-wide initiative between the IFRC and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to invest in building resilient public health security infrastructure on the continent will reinforce the fight against COVID-19. Under the US\$39 million Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative funded by the Mastercard Foundation, the IFRC and African National Societies

are building a programme to ensure that 60 per cent of African people vaccinate themselves against COVID-19. The partnership between the Mastercard Foundation and Africa CDC will support the procurement and delivery of tens of millions of COVID-19 vaccines and hasten economic recovery on the continent. Under this programme, the Malawi Red Cross will deliver critical risk communication and community engagement activities to vulnerable communities in support of COVID-19 vaccine uptake. Other programme partners will provide procurement and logistics services to a central warehouse (UNICEF), in-country logistics (World Food Programme), managing COVID-19 vaccination centres (Amref Health Africa and GHSS) and safety surveillance (Akros).

The Malawi Red Cross is also part of the planned Community Health Workforce Development initiative, which aims to improve health outcomes for African communities by scaling up a people-centred community health workforce and system. Based on the existing Memorandum of Understanding between the Africa CDC and the IFRC, the scope of the programme will be to organize and mobilize the community health workforce for the COVID-19 response and maintain essential health services. A wider health system strengthening approach will be taken to address the secondary health impacts of COVID-19, including health promotion, disease prevention, community-based care, contact tracing, an increase in mass testing, and greater COVID-19 vaccine access and availability. The partners will also collaborate to support member states in attaining the universal health coverage aspect of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. This includes advocating for changes in policy and approach – based on key issues identified through community feedback and social science research, such as task shifting in the community health workforce.

To address broader health needs, the Malawi Red Cross will focus on ensuring that all people have safe and equitable access to health, water, sanitation and adequate living conditions. This means expanding integrated community-based health and first aid, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene programmes to address the unmet needs of vulnerable or marginalized groups. This also includes a significant investment in epidemic and pandemic preparedness. Local actors, networks and volunteers are particularly important, as they are able to act as community-based responders, detecting and responding to disease outbreaks and other health risks.

This work will enable the Malawi Red Cross to realize its high-level objectives:

- To provide contextually appropriate health services
- To reach out to people with appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene services
- To offer mental health and psychosocial support services to people in need
- To train people in first aid

In 2023, with support from the IFRC network, the Malawi Red Cross plans to:

- Develop a comprehensive strategic plan for health, water, sanitation and hygiene
- Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Health on community health interventions
- Enhance recognition of National Society volunteers in community health interventions
- Revamp and train community health structures in collaboration with the Ministry of Health
- Improve the efficiency of community health information dissemination
- Enhance the delivery of basic health care services through outreach clinics in hard-to-reach areas
- Develop basic health infrastructure and establish health posts
- Contribute to efforts to achieve and sustain national immunization targets
- Promote fair and equitable access to new vaccines, including future COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX facility
- Facilitate menstrual hygiene management efforts
- Train staff and volunteers on sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response
- Promote sanitation marketing in communities, and ensure latrines and facilities in schools are suitable for menstrual hygiene management
- Conduct Community-Led Total Sanitation and School-Led Total Sanitation awareness campaigns
- Train communities on epidemic preparedness, emergency water, sanitation and hygiene, and community-based surveillance, including oral rehydration therapy

- Provide access to safe water by drilling boreholes if possible (to be used by water-scarce communities and schools), or alternatively install gravity-fed water systems or solar-pumped boreholes

Migration and displacement

Political instability and social unrest around the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa have resulted in a continued flow of refugees into Malawi for more than two decades. Malawi is host to refugees and asylum seekers from countries such as Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Mozambique, who are fleeing their respective countries due to wars and political unrest. It is also a route for an increasing number of asylum seekers moving between countries across Southern Africa. In 2022, Malawi hosted 89,618 people who were refugees or seeking asylum, compared with the 52,678 persons of concern registered by UNHCR in December 2021.

Most of the refugees and asylum seekers in Malawi live in the Dzaleka refugee camp in Dowa district, about 41km from the capital Lilongwe. The camp was established to host up to 12,000 people, but now hosts more than 52,000. Dzaleka is a protracted camp setting, receiving about 300 new arrivals each month: 62 per cent from the DRC, 19 per cent from Burundi, seven per cent from Rwanda and two per cent from elsewhere. Of the identified persons of concern, 45 per cent are women and 48 per cent are children. Approximately 40 per cent of the people in the camp have refugee status and 60 per cent are asylum seekers. UNHCR and the World Food Programme distribute cash and provide goods and services to people in the camp, as most depend on humanitarian assistance.

There was further population movement in Malawi after Tropical Storm Ana, which hit the country in January 2022 and resulted in more than 190,000 people losing or fleeing their homes. By the end of May, three months after the storm had ended, more than 53,000 people were still displaced and living in camps or settlements in the Nsanje and Chikwawa districts of southern Malawi. The camps in the Nsanje district continue to host more than 35,300 people, while those in the Chikwawa district host 18,500 people. Many of the 18 camps set up for internally displaced persons after the storm lack basic necessities and services, so the people who live there need assistance from humanitarian agencies. Nsanje is also host to families who fled from neighbouring Mozambique in the wake of the storm.

The Red Cross in Malawi has supported the Government's response with tents, provision of food and non-food items, and camp management.

Human trafficking has recently become a concern in the city of Chipata, on the border between Malawi and Zambia. This has highlighted the need for stronger migration services, and better advocacy and coordination on trafficking prevention between the two countries.

Main actions and areas of support

The Malawi Red Cross has collaborated with the Government and UNHCR to support restoring family links services for refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons. This includes restoring contact between family members, free phone calls or internet communication with family members, Red Cross Messages for relatives, and support for unaccompanied children.

The National Society will focus on making sure that all people who migrate or are displaced are safe, treated humanely and with dignity, and have the assistance and protection they need to thrive in inclusive societies.

To reach these goals, the National Society will:

- Conduct a migration and displacement needs assessment and integrate migration and displacement into strategic planning
- Operate along main migratory routes, where it will establish humanitarian service points that provide access to assistance, protection and integration support to migrants and displaced persons

In 2023, with support from the IFRC network, the National Society plans to:

- Provide necessities to migrants, displaced people and their families, and provide restoring family links services
- Advocate with authorities on the issue of people not being registered as refugees – ensuring that the rights of asylum seekers are respected in accordance with international law
- Coordinate with relevant organizations, in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to track human trafficking
- Conduct awareness meetings with communities on the negative effects of human trafficking and encourage better reporting of human trafficking cases

- Facilitate several communication channels to share information and receive feedback from migrants, displaced people and host communities
- Address feedback from targeted groups that will be incorporated into activities and key messages
- Facilitate referral pathways for migrants and displaced persons to appropriate service providers

Values, power and inclusion

Women comprise 52 per cent of the population and according to the World Bank 80 per cent of the workforce in Malawi, and 59 per cent of employed women work in agriculture. The situation of women and girls in Malawi is less advanced than that of men and boys in terms of literacy, education, political participation and land ownership. Women in Malawi have little control over land and lack access to economic resources. While adequate legal frameworks exist, support for women and girls is under-resourced and inadequate. Female-headed households are particularly vulnerable, and this limits their productivity and income while making them more vulnerable to poverty. Improving food security and reducing poverty across Malawi is an essential part of improving women's inclusion in society. There is also a need for improved maternal and child health care, family planning and reproductive health activities.

Gender-based violence remains a serious challenge in Malawi. According to the Malawi Demographic and Health Survey 2015-2016, 21 per cent of women reported that they have experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives. Food insecurity is often linked to increases in gender-based violence, as protection risks spike during the lean season when food insecurity pushes women and girls to travel longer distances to find food and water.

Malawi has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world – approximately 42 per cent of girls are married before the age of 18, and nine per cent before they turn 15. This practice severely limits girls' education and sexual and reproductive health, especially in rural areas. In areas that are particularly food insecure, the practice is linked to poverty, with girls lured or sold into early marriages in exchange for food. UNICEF and UNDP are working with local community leaders to eliminate child marriage, and communities are becoming engaged in programmes that enable girls to return to education.

The population of Malawi is very young – 80 per cent of people are under 35 years of age and the median age is 17. Malawi's youthful population is one of its best assets, and has been identified as a key area for development and empowerment by the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy. However, young people face a range of challenges in accessing health care, education, employment and participation in society. The inclusion of young people in planning and programming must be a key priority for the Government and organizations including the Malawi Red Cross.

Main actions and areas of support

The Malawi Red Cross is a grassroots organization that encourages inclusion and equality in its volunteer base. The National Society needs committed male and female volunteers of all ages, ethnicities and religions, working together to improve their own communities, and it will continue to work towards this goal in 2023.

The National Society will listen to the needs of the communities it serves by facilitating a feedback and complaints process. This will ensure that targeted groups can actively participate in the work of the National Society and guide the implementation of services. The National Society will also adopt innovative approaches to better understanding and engaging

communities, so that it can enable them to address unhealthy and unsafe practices. It will maximize its unique position within communities to help people to speak out about the issues that affect them, and to influence decision-makers and policy-makers to bring about positive change.

To achieve these goals, with support from the IFRC network, the National Society will:

- Ensure that branches have the capacity to incorporate the Fundamental Principles and Red Cross Red Crescent humanitarian values, through peer-to-peer education
- Ensure that all operations, programmes and services provide dignity, access, participation and safety for all affected marginalized and excluded people
- Continue to mainstream and institutionalize community engagement and accountability
- Conduct training on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, and response mechanisms
- Facilitate the establishment of reporting and referral systems, including mobile courts and psychosocial support services

Enabling local actors

The Malawi Red Cross is committed to pursue its institutional strengthening, and carried out the self-assessment part of the Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process in 2013. The self-assessment part of the OCAC process is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies as a whole in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities. The IFRC network is committed to support the National Society in its development in line with the priorities it has set for itself.

Engaged

With support from the IFRC network, the Malawi Red Cross plans to:

- Unpack the Humanitarian Diplomacy Guidance notes
- Establish branch development plans that take an innovative approach to service delivery through the use of social media to broadcast its activities, online data management, branding and crowdfunding

- Define its auxiliary role with the local authorities and position itself as the partner of choice in the humanitarian field
- Strengthen its auxiliary role, positioning and voice through strategic engagement with governmental and other influential organizations, by offering persuasive, data-driven evidence that supports its work
- Ensure the existence of a functioning intranet, a full-time IT officer and an information and communications technology system, developed with support from the Icelandic Red Cross (staff will be trained on risks, ethics and protection)
- Conduct data protection training for staff

Accountable

The Malawi Red Cross recently conducted a high-level risk assessment and developed an organization-wide risk register. To build on this work and further strengthen its accountability, the IFRC network will support it to:

- Provide financial training and internal controls
- Provide security assessment training, knowledge sharing and better direct support, through coaching on a case-by-case basis
- Develop a security risk register and mitigation measures, aimed at reducing risks to an acceptable level
- Operationalize a resource mobilization framework, in accordance with the National Society's implementation plan

Trusted

The Malawi Red Cross will support activities that build trust and acceptance of its staff and volunteers, which in turn will improve the quality of programming and the

safety of frontline staff. Furthermore, it will strengthen local structures that allow for greater community resilience and sustainability.

The National Society is committed to implementing certain safeguarding measures for dealing with sexual exploitation and abuse. It has a policy on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, to ensure that all employees, volunteers, partners, suppliers, beneficiaries and service users are protected from it. This policy, implemented alongside both the code of conduct and whistleblower protection policy, applies to all employees – including all paid and unpaid consultants, volunteers, contractors and vendors that provide supplies, services and support to the National Society.

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC, through its country cluster delegation in Harare, supports the Malawi Red Cross with strategic and operational coordination, National Society development and humanitarian diplomacy, including strengthening its auxiliary role. It also supports accountability as a cross-cutting theme.

In recent years, the IFRC has supported the Malawi Red Cross through the provision of various DREF and Emergency Appeal [operations](#) in response to floods, disease outbreaks and tropical storms. An Emergency Appeal launched in late 2021 and a DREF operation launched in September 2022 will continue into 2023. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IFRC, through its [global Emergency Appeal](#), has also supported the National Society with its COVID-19 response.

In relation to the Emergency Appeal for Tropical Storm Ana, the IFRC continues to provide coordination and technical support to the National Society. During the first three months, six rapid response personnel were deployed to support and advise on the implementation of the response plan: an operations manager; a water, sanitation and hygiene coordinator; a shelter cluster coordinator; a shelter cluster information manager; and two delegates (specializing in water, sanitation and hygiene, and administration and logistics) from the new Norwegian Red Cross Water Systems Rehabilitation Module.

Other staff were deployed from the IFRC country cluster delegation and regional office as needed. The IFRC has procured non-food items needed for the in-country response. The IFRC will continue to maintain a high level of support, including resource mobilization support, remotely and through regular monitoring visits, provided through the IFRC country cluster delegation and the IFRC Africa regional office.

IFRC membership coordination

IFRC coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs, and agree on common priorities. It also involves co-development of common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space; mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action and development assistance, while reinforcing the auxiliary role of the Malawi Red Cross.

The Malawi Red Cross is part of the IFRC network New Way of Working initiative, which is piloted in 14 countries. It aims at establishing a new model of membership coordination, working over multiple years to instil a thorough change management in the ways the IFRC network

Participating National Society Support - Bilateral

Name of Partner NS	Funding Requirements	Climate	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing	Migration	Values, power and inclusion	Engaged	Accountable	Trusted
American Red Cross	CHF 0.18M								
Belgian Red Cross			●	●					
Danish Red Cross	CHF 5.90M		●						
Finnish Red Cross		●	●	●		●			
Icelandic Red Cross		●	●						
Italian Red Cross	CHF 0.10M		●						
Netherlands Red Cross			●						
Swiss Red Cross				●					

Total

6.18M

works together and placing the National Society of the country at the centre. This includes prioritizing effective coordination for much greater gains, optimizing the power of working as one IFRC network by sharing resources, learnings and common standards, and to ultimately achieve greater impact. Particular attention is given to collective planning to ensure that National Society partners participate in one multi-year country plan, which will ensure that the resources and expertise of the network in country are used in a complementary and efficient way.

The Malawi Red Cross is part of the four IFRC Pan-African initiatives focusing on Tree Planting and Care; Zero Hunger; Red Ready and National Society Development. These initiatives are reflected under the relevant sections of this plan.

The Malawi Red Cross is being supported by a consortium of in-country participating National Societies. It is led by the **Danish Red Cross**, which works alongside the **Finnish Red Cross**, **Icelandic Red Cross**, **Italian Red Cross** and **Swiss Red Cross**, and the **Netherlands Red Cross** is supporting remotely. The consortium supports the National Society with shelter initiatives, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) projects and flood recovery support.

The **Finnish Red Cross** has given its support specifically on the election response and first aid. The **Icelandic Red Cross** has focused on community resilience projects. The **Swiss Red Cross** has supported work on health, water, sanitation and hygiene, and blood donor recruitment.

Movement coordination

The Malawi Red Cross, the IFRC, the ICRC and participating National Societies meet on a regular basis to ensure their work is complementarily aligned. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) principles, and

the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#). The ICRC has no permanent presence in Malawi, but makes regular visits to support restoring family links services in emergencies.

Coordination with other actors

The Malawi Red Cross works closely with the Government, which leads the overall coordination of any humanitarian emergency or disaster response through its Department of Disaster Management Affairs. The disaster management structure stems from the disaster technical working group at the national level; civil protection committees at the district level; area civil protection committees at the traditional authority level; and civil protection committees at the group village level. The National Society is a member of the Civil Protection Committee and the National Disaster Preparedness and Relief Committee that comprises the principal secretaries of all key ministries and departments, and three non-governmental organizations. It is also a member of the National Disaster Technical Working Group.

There is a humanitarian country team in Malawi chaired by UNDP, which is the coordination platform for all humanitarian bodies to ensure coordinated strategies and approaches. The National Society participates in all coordination meetings at the national and district levels, including clusters for shelter and camp management, search and rescue, food security and water, sanitation and hygiene. In addition to being a member of all clusters, it is also a sub-lead for the early warning cluster.

The IFRC and the Malawi Red Cross co-chair the shelter cluster, which was activated as part of the response to Tropical Storm Ana. As part of the IFRC Emergency

Appeal, a shelter cluster coordinator was deployed to Malawi in February 2022 to support the existing shelter cluster coordination group, which is normally co-chaired by the National Society. The IFRC has also deployed an information management coordinator to develop the products needed to guide the response for all the organizations and government agencies involved in shelter activities. The Global Shelter Cluster is an inter-agency standing committee coordination mechanism, and the IFRC has been leading it in disaster contexts since the establishment of the cluster approach in 2005. This critical mandate places the IFRC as one of the lead agencies in the international humanitarian coordination system. The IFRC leverages its leadership position in the Global Shelter Cluster for improved coordination, stronger policies and standards across the shelter sector, and better support for affected people in their recovery.

In Malawi, notable partners of the National Society are UNICEF, Médecins Sans Frontières, World Food Programme, GOAL Malawi, Eagle Relief, Care Malawi, World Vision, Habitat for Humanity International and ShelterBox. In addition to partners within the Movement that support the response to Tropical Storm Ana, the National Society has developed multiple partnerships with companies from the private sector and philanthropic foundations that have supported it with financial contributions and donations.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\)](#) data
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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